

**Amendments to the Claims:** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Original) A catalyst composition comprising the reaction product of an alkoxide or condensed alkoxide of a metal M, selected from titanium, zirconium, hafnium, aluminium, or a lanthanide, an alcohol containing at least two hydroxyl groups, a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and a base, wherein the molar ratio of base to 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid is in the range 0.01 – 0.79:1.
2. (Currently Amended) A catalyst composition ~~as claimed in~~ according to claim 1, wherein the alcohol containing at least two hydroxyl groups is selected from the group consisting of 1,2-ethanediol, 1,2-propanediol, 1,3-propanediol, 1,4-butane diol, diethylene glycol and a polyethylene glycol.
3. (Currently Amended) A catalyst composition ~~as claimed in either~~ according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid ~~comprises~~ is selected from the group consisting of lactic acid, citric acid, malic acid or tartaric acid.
4. (Currently Amended) A catalyst composition ~~as claimed in any of the preceding claims~~ according to claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of the 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid to metal in the reaction product is from 1 to 4 moles of 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid per mole of metal M.
5. (Currently Amended) A catalyst composition ~~as claimed in any of the preceding claims~~ according to claim 1, wherein the base ~~comprises~~ is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, ammonium hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, magnesium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, aluminium acetate, zinc oxide, caesium carbonate or ammonia.
6. (Currently Amended) A catalyst composition ~~as claimed in any of the preceding claims~~ according to claim 1, wherein the metal M is selected from titanium and zirconium.
7. (Currently Amended) A process for the preparation of an ester comprising carrying out an esterification reaction in the presence of a catalyst composition ~~as claimed in any of the preceding claims~~ comprising the reaction product of an alkoxide or condensed

alkoxide of a metal M, selected from titanium, zirconium, hafnium, aluminium, or a lanthanide, an alcohol containing at least two hydroxyl groups, a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and a base, wherein the molar ratio of base to 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid is in the range 0.01-0.79:1.

8. (Currently Amended) A process ~~as claimed in~~ according to claim 7, wherein said esterification reaction comprises the reaction of an acid or anhydride selected from stearic acid, isostearic acid, capric acid, caproic acid, palmitic acid, oleic acid, palmitoleic acid, triacontanoic acid, benzoic acid, methyl benzoic acid, salicylic acid, phthalic acid, isophthalic acid, terephthalic acid, sebacic acid, adipic acid, azelaic acid, succinic acid, fumaric acid, maleic acid, naphthalene dicarboxylic acid, pamoic acid, trimellitic acid, citric acid, trimesic acid, pyromellitic acid and anhydrides of these acids with an alcohol selected from butyl, pentyl, hexyl, octyl and stearyl alcohols, 2-ethylhexanol, glycerol and pentaerythritol.
9. (Currently Amended) A process ~~as claimed in~~ according to claim 7, wherein said esterification reaction is a polyesterification reaction comprising the reaction of one or more polybasic acids or esters of polybasic acids and one or more polyhydric alcohols to produce a polymeric ester.
10. (Currently Amended) A process ~~as claimed in~~ according to claim 9, wherein said polyesterification reaction comprises the reaction of terephthalic acid or dimethyl terephthalate with 1,2-ethanediol (ethylene glycol) to produce polyethylene terephthalate, with 1,3-propane diol to form poly(trimethylene)terephthalate, or with 1,4-butanediol (butylene glycol) to produce polybutylene terephthalate (PBT) or the reaction of naphthalene dicarboxylic acid with 1,2-ethanediol to produce polyethylene naphthalate (PEN).
11. (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the alcohol containing at least two hydroxyl groups is selected from the group consisting of 1,2-ethanediol, 1,2-propanediol, 1,3-propanediol, 1,4-butane diol, diethylene glycol and a polyethylene glycol.
12. (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid ~~comprises~~ is selected from the group consisting of lactic acid, citric acid, malic acid ~~or~~ and tartaric acid.

13. (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the molar ratio of the 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid to titanium or zirconium in the reaction product is from 1 to 4 moles of 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid per mole of metal M.
14. (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein the base is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, ammonium hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, magnesium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, aluminium acetate, zinc oxide, caesium carbonate and ammonia.
15. (New) A process according to claim 7, wherein M is selected from titanium and zirconium.